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PSYC 210: Social Psychology

Homework Assignment #2

I interviewed two Earlham freshmen, Uyen and Ani, about one of their experience of being ostracized. Uyen’s experience is very recent; she gets ostracized in her lab group for her chemistry class. Her two other group members are really close before the class, so they would usually talk and discuss with each other only and ignore her, so she felt left out at times. When she was ostracized, she experienced a lower sense of self-esteem and belonging, but she understood and accepted the reason why she was ostracized. She was able to regain a sense of belonging and self-esteem by talking with her own circle of friends who appreciate her presence. Ani’s experience dates back to her high school days when she got ostracized because no one empathized with her when she was bullied. The people around her told her to accept it as something that cannot be solved, and turned away from her for they don’t want to be bullied as well. She felt a lower sense of self-esteem, self-control and belonging at the same time as she felt her opinions are not taken seriously, and only regained them when she discovered her interest in photography as a convincing way to express her opinions without using words.

I think prolonged experiences with ostracism may make a person unable to ever regain his or her sense of self-esteem. Constant ostracism can lead people to think that they are not worth being associated with as individuals and will never be likeable no matter how hard they try. They may also always be too conscious and anxious of others’ judgments about them and thus more hesitant to express their opinions openly because of their fear of rejection. Thus, they would be always unconfident about themselves and unable to appreciate or embrace their own existence. In extreme cases, I think feelings of loneliness and depression derived from ostracism may even cause them to lose the will to live and inflict harm on themselves.